

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 02995

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: SHUM IR  
SUBJ: HUMAN RIGHTS DISCUSSION WITH SHAH

1. DURING AUDIENCE WHICH I HAD WITH SHAH MORNING MARCH 28  
ON OTHER MATTERS, CONVERSATION TURNED TO DISSIDENTS, DISTURBANCES  
IN TABRIZ, SECURITY PRISONERS AND OTHER SUBJECTS UNDER GENERAL  
HEADING OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

2. SHAH SAID HE WAS STILL PUZZLED BY MANNER IN WHICH TABRIZ  
DISTURBANCES HAD BEEN ORGANIZED. ON FACE OF IT, THE WHOLE  
EVENT APPEARED TO BE REACTIONARY. ALL THE TARGETS WERE SYMBOLS  
OF SECULAR MODERNISMS SUCH AS THEATERS, BANKS, TV ANTENNA,  
ETC. IT WOULD BE LOGICAL TO CONCLUDE THAT THE MULLAHS HAD  
ORGANIZED THE WHOLE AFFAIR AS A "RELIGIOUS" BLOW AT ANTI-ISLAMIC  
ACTIVITY.

3. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE SAID, THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE THAT  
THE MULLAHS WERE THAT WELL ARTICULATED, OR CAPABLE OF PUTTING  
SUCH A DEMONSTRATION TOGETHER. HE HARBORED THE SUSPICION  
THAT THERE MUST HAVE BEEN LEFT-WING EXTREMISTS INVOLVED.  
AND THIS IN TURN LED HIM TO BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIETS WERE  
BEHIND IT, AS THEY HAVE BEEN HISTORICALLY IN AZERBAIJAN.  
UNFORTUNATELY, HE ADMITTED, HE COULDN'T PROVE IT. (COMMENT:  
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SEVERAL IRANIAN OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD EMBASSY THAT THEY  
ATTRIBUTE RIOTS TO BASIC MISHANDLING BY TABRIZ OFFICIALS,  
RATHER THAN MORE SINISTER FORCES ADDUCED BY SHAH.)

4. IN DILATING ON DISTURBANCES AND DISSIDENTS IN GENERAL, HE  
REAFFIRMED HIS PUBLICLY STATED INTENTION TO CONTINUE THE  
PROCESS OF LIBERALIZATION, IN THE HOPE THAT RESPONSIBLE

POLITICAL ELEMENTS WOULD PREVENT TOO MANY ABUSES. I ENCOURAGED HIM IN THIS INTENTION AND SAID THE LIBERALIZATION PROCESS WAS WELL RECEIVED IN THE UNITED STATES AND ELSEWHERE INTERNATIONALLY.

5. HE THEN EXPANDED TO SAY THAT IT IS INTENTION TO "EMPTY OUR JAILS" OF POLITICAL PRISONERS. HE SAID HE HAD BEEN DELIBERATELY GENEROUS IN RECENT PARDONS AND AMNESTIES. HE WAS NOW ENCOUNTERING SOME PROBLEMS WITH SEVERAL POLITICAL PRISONERS WHO ARE SERVING LONG SENTENCES. THESE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN TOLD THEY WILL GET THEIR SENTENCES REMITTED OR COMMUTED IF THEY ASK FOR CLEMENCY. THE PRISONERS HAVE DESCRIBED THIS CONDITION AS "MENTAL TORTURE" AND HAVE GONE ON HUNGER STRIKE. HE SAID HE REALLY DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO COPE WITH THIS NEW TURN OF EVENTS.

6. I SAID MY REACTION TO THIS -- HE SHOULD EXCUSE THE EXPRESSION -- WAS "WELCOME TO THE CLUB". I SAID WE AND MOST WESTERN GOVERNMENTS WERE HAVING THE SAME PROBLEMS IN DEALING WITH SHREWD TACTICS BY PRISONERS AND THAT, WHILE IT WAS NOT EASY TO COPE WITH, WE FELT DUE PROCESS WAS STILL IMPORTANT. SHAH LAUGHED AND SAID I DIDN'T WORRY THAT HE WOULD GET ROUGHT -- BUT HE JUST HADN'T FIGURED HOW TO HANDLE THE NEW SITUATION CONSTRUCTIVELY.

7. HE THEN WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE WAS VEXED TO NOTE THAT THE MORE HE RELAXED THINGS, THE WORSE PUBLICITY HE GOT  
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IN THE WEST. HE CITED THE STATEMENTS BY IRANIAN STUDENT GROUPS IN THE U.S. AND ELSEWHERE. I SAID THAT I THOUGHT THE GOOD SENSE OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WOULD PREVAIL AND THAT THEY WOULD EVENTUALLY BE ABLE TO RECOGNIZE WHEN ACTION WAS POSITIVE AND WHEN PROPAGANDA WAS MISLEADING. SHAH ENDED BY EXPRESSING HOPE U.S. GOVERNMENT WOULD HELP "GUIDE" AMERICAN PEOPLE'S GOOD SENSE BY EXPOSING IRANIAN STUDENT GROUPS AS DEMAGOGUES.  
SULLIVAN

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